



Testimony of

**Ed Hawthorne, President
Connecticut AFL-CIO**

Human Services Committee
February 14, 2023

***HB 6616 An Act Concerning Expansion of Husky Health Benefits
to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status***

Good afternoon, Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Ed Hawthorne, and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing almost 250,000 active and retired workers in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great. It is on their behalf that I submit testimony in support of HB 6616 An Act Concerning Expansion of Husky Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

Healthcare is a human right that must be recognized without bias on the grounds of race, gender, age, ethnicity or immigration status. We have an obligation to ensure access to timely, quality and affordable healthcare to all. The General Assembly has made steady progress on this goal over the last two years by allowing undocumented pregnant people to access prenatal and postpartum care through Husky and by expanding Husky access to undocumented children up to the age of 12. Despite this important progress, many immigrants are still left behind. HB 6616 would expand Husky to all Connecticut residents up to age 26, regardless of immigration status.

Undocumented residents older than 12 are currently ineligible for HUSKY coverage. They are also unable to access the state's health insurance marketplace Access Health CT, Medicaid, Medicare and other state and federal programs. It's therefore no surprise that 50% of the roughly 113,000 undocumented immigrants in Connecticut lack health insurance.¹ This creates significant burdens for affected families. Having residents go without health insurance is also a burden for the state. Enacting HB 6616 would generate savings for hospitals and other healthcare facilities by reducing uncompensated care costs.

In 2022 polling, a clear majority (57%) of Connecticut voters supported allowing all residents who meet income requirements to receive insurance through HUSKY, regardless of immigration status. There is even stronger support for allowing all children to receive insurance through HUSKY -- two thirds of voters (66%) are in favor.² Expanding HUSKY access to all children and young adults would move Connecticut closer to a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving, growing workforce ready to meet the needs of our future. I urge the Committee to support this bill.

¹<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9718064/#:~:text=In%20particular%2C%20undocumented%20immigrants%20are,coverage%20or%20receive%20marketplace%20subsidies.>

² https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GmQYibeuYc_D_RKYWTI-7IsJ9LXADDQ/view